

A Public Realm Vision for the Eastern City



EASTERN CITY

Publica

CHRISTINA
NORTON

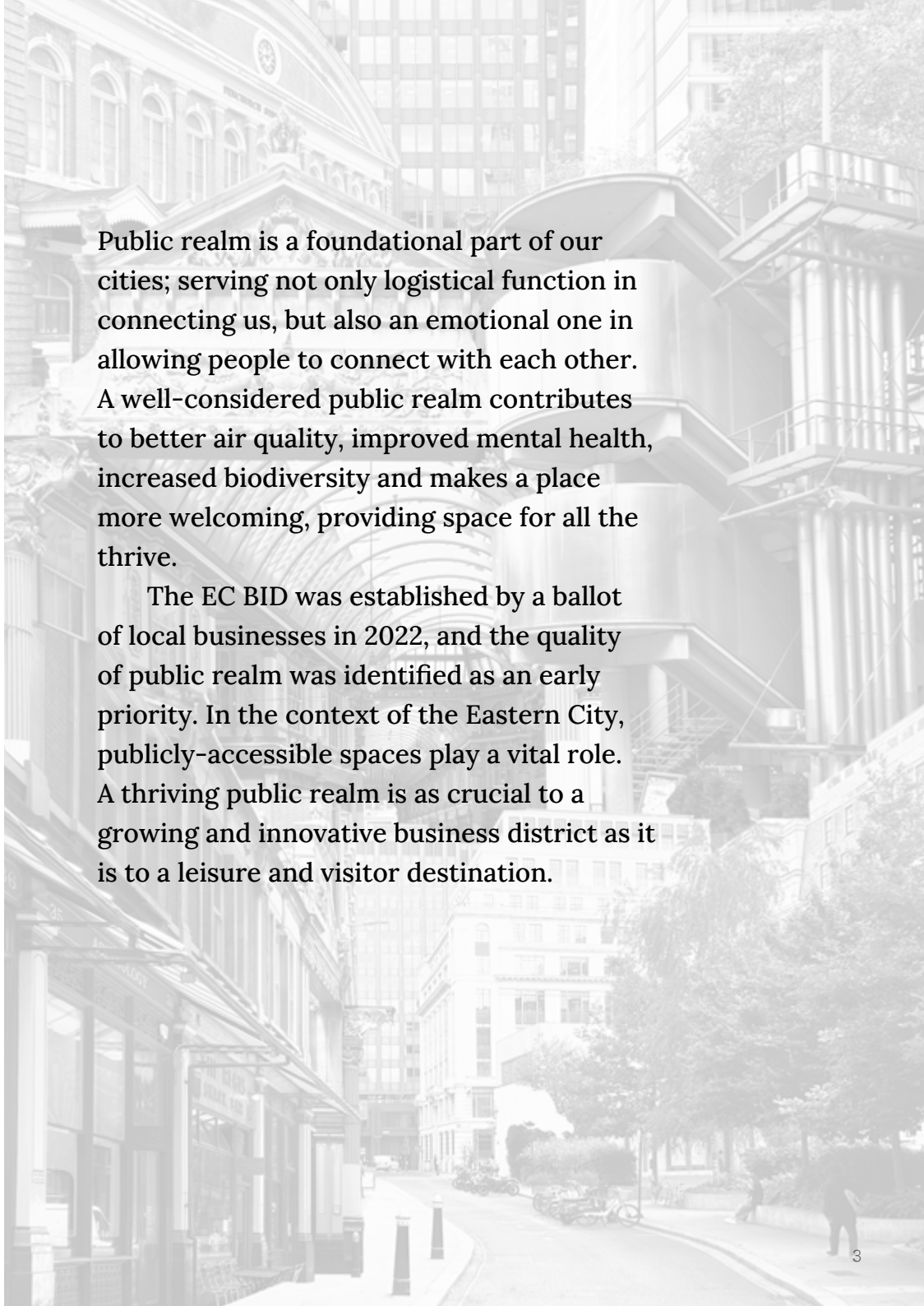
NRP
NORMAN ROUKE REYME

Donald Insall Associates

Contents

Introduction	4
Evidence base	10
Aims and guiding principles	16
Project families and site-specific interventions	18
Next steps	46

This report is an abridged summary of a full report that includes more details about area-wide recommendations and site-specific interventions that have emerged from the study.



Public realm is a foundational part of our cities; serving not only logistical function in connecting us, but also an emotional one in allowing people to connect with each other. A well-considered public realm contributes to better air quality, improved mental health, increased biodiversity and makes a place more welcoming, providing space for all the thrive.

The EC BID was established by a ballot of local businesses in 2022, and the quality of public realm was identified as an early priority. In the context of the Eastern City, publicly-accessible spaces play a vital role. A thriving public realm is as crucial to a growing and innovative business district as it is to a leisure and visitor destination.

A distinct and exciting place

The area's physical density and its identity as a hub of finance, insurance, and commerce put the Eastern City on the map of truly global neighbourhoods. The modern, international energy of the area, made manifest by glass and steel skyscrapers, stands in contrast to the brick and stone that comprise the remnants of the Roman city, the narrow alleyways and the hidden gardens and yards, all of which contribute to a distinctiveness that sets the City apart from its international peers.

These contrasting characters of old and new have a strong presence on the urban pattern and shape the overall experience of the public realm. Medieval yards and laneways to the west of Gracechurch Street and Bishopsgate have found their contemporary equivalent in the wider covered walkways and large plazas to the east.

The Vision celebrates this contrast as the defining characteristic of the area. The Eastern City feels like an exciting place to be a part of precisely because of its dramatic contrasts, between the commercial activity and towering architecture, and the specificity of its history, smaller-scale buildings, and its quieter, surprising moments.



Why public realm and why now?

More workers, more visitors

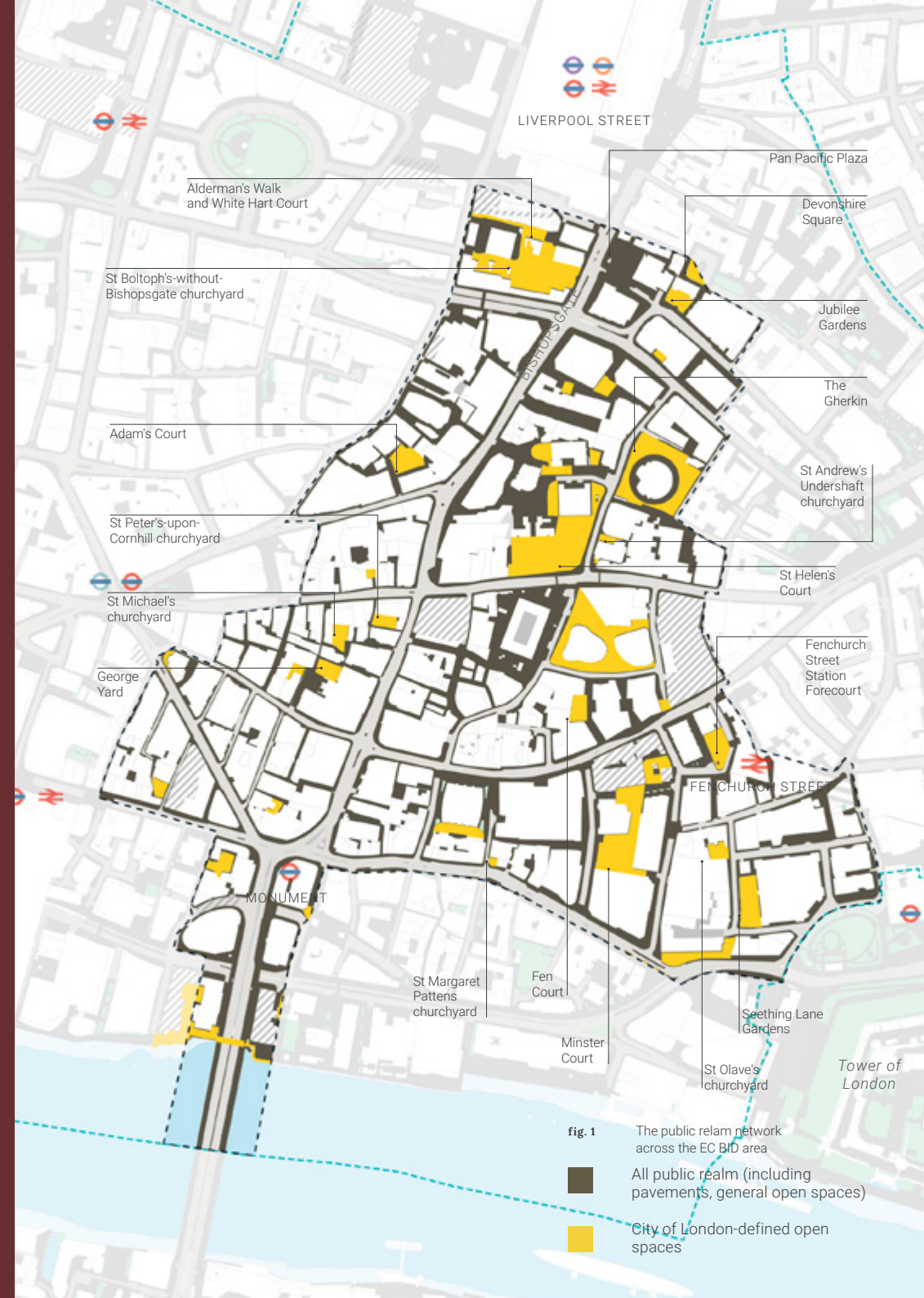
As the City sees more workers returning to work, the Corporation is promoting cultural and leisure initiatives to bring activities and events to the City that extend beyond working hours. New uses, and a more varied array of things to do and see are all part of the vision for the City to attract a more diverse audience. Through the Destination City programme, and with increasing attention given on supporting cultural uses, more visitors, both international and local, will come to the City for non-work activities.

An evolving street network

There is already significant resource being leveraged toward improving the streets and spaces in this area, by the City of London Corporation, Transport for London (TfL) and private developers. These projects will greatly improve the public realm across the Eastern City; but they present a challenge in ensuring that the public realm remains cohesive. The BID can play a role in supporting the projects that are already underway, and also in convening stakeholders, partnering with the City and developers to deliver the projects that contribute meaningfully to public life.

Alignment with business and environmental priorities

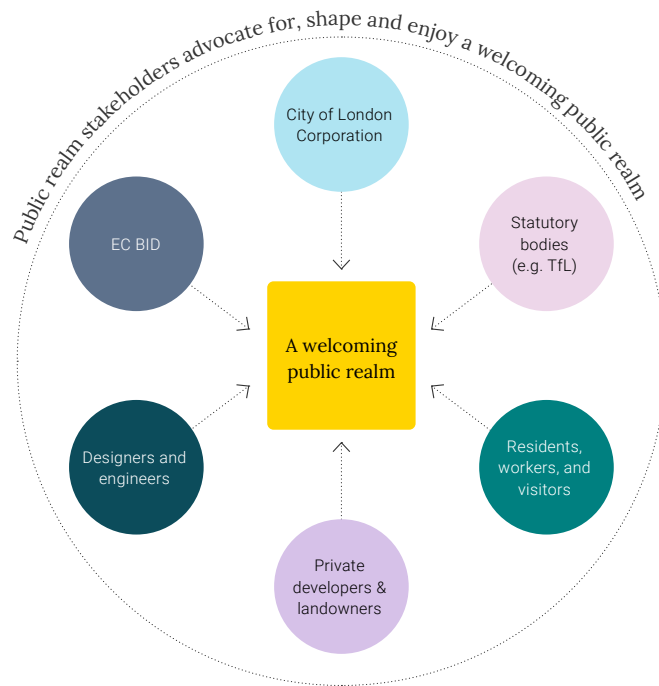
Global cities face many challenges, from responding to the climate crisis and meaningfully engaging on ESG, to remaining competitive and relevant in the post pandemic environment. As the Eastern City area stands of the edge of a new era of transformation and growth, now is a good time to consider what opportunities these changes present for public realm, helping to create a more accessible, inclusive and liveable destination.



About the Vision

A new approach

This Vision seeks to align a diverse set of priorities from a range of stakeholders, from workers, to neighbours and visitors, to the City of London Corporation, to the development community and property owners. The BID will champion this partnership approach to improving the public realm, embracing the different ways each stakeholder can contribute to the process.



Methodology

In December 2023 the EC BID appointed independent research and urban design practice Publica, transport consultants NRP, heritage specialists Donald Insall Associates, and public engagement experts Christina Norton and Jessica Cargill-Thompson, to deliver a long-term vision for the streets and public spaces around the Eastern City area.

Structure

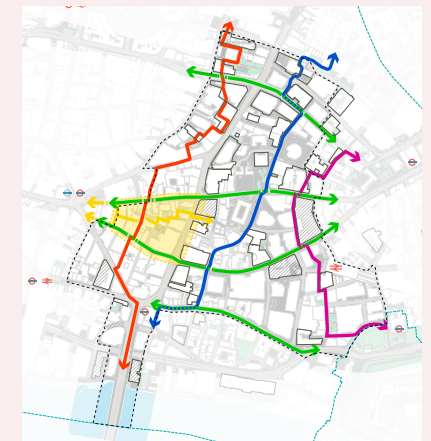
The Public Realm Vision is divided into two sections:

AIMS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- + Outlines principles to guide long-term strategy and conversations with stakeholders
- + Includes recommendations for area-wide initiatives

PROJECT FAMILIES

- + Highlights site-specific interventions
- + Three types of improvements, ranging from small-scale interventions and priority projects to transformative projects



What we heard

Between February and March 2024, we spoke to a diverse range of people, from office workers to students, visitors, residents, families with young children, food-stall vendors, librarians, lunchtime runners, and cyclists. We had conversations with people of different ages, different backgrounds, different mobility needs, and with different priorities and aspirations for the area.

What's special about the public spaces and social life in the Eastern City?

- + "There is a buzz around the Eastern City that comes from the workforce—lots of people who are driven and committed and look to use the environment to facilitate meetings and interactions with others."
- + "Great skyline and architecture!"
- + "The juxtaposition of old and new is special: medieval churches and Victorian markets, nestled amongst some of the most iconic skyscrapers in the world."
- + "Viewing towers are big attractions."
- + "The old passageways and lanes provide authenticity and charm due to their human scale. It's important not to lose the historic charm of the area."
- + "It would be great to have a big screen to watch the Euros; they have one at Canary Wharf—and deckchairs to sit in."

What do you not like about the area?

- "There aren't enough places to sit, they're always taken."
- "Less priority for tall glass towers with no activity at the ground floor, with massive lobbies with nothing."
- "Too much concrete!"
- "There is a lack of things to do after work if you don't want to go drinking."
- "There are no protected cycle lanes other than on Camomile Street, which is just a few wands. Monument junction is completely hostile to pedestrians or lingering and Houndsditch is impossible to cross."
- "The area is let down by a lack of community."
- "We need street signs! Wayfinding!"

What we found

Public realm

- + The public realm network is distinguished by contrasting scales and uses, from medieval passageways and low-traffic lanes to contemporary office plazas.
- + The public realm network can be divided into spaces for movement and spaces for dwelling: spaces for movement make up 7% of the area.
- + Office lobbies cover more than 4,000 sqm of ground floor space.
- + Some office lobbies are ostensibly public, but a lack of signage and the presence of security guards do not create inviting spaces. Lobbies with cafés feel more welcoming.
- + The four publicly-accessible spaces at height in the area have differing levels and quality of amenity, and don't function as incidental public space.
- + The area's public spaces and benches use hard and dark materials, like dark granite, which contribute to the harsh environment.

Trees and planting

- + There is only 4,900 square metres of existing green space in the area, equalling 1% of the total BID area. On average, 20% of the area of Greater London is green space.
- + Intensely windy environmental conditions, often exacerbated by downdrafts from tall towers, make some planting untenable and some public spaces unusable.
- + The most successful and well-used green spaces have multiple different types of planting species.
- + Of the 306 trees in the BID area, 39 (13%) were found to be in an unhealthy condition.
- + The BID area's 6 green walls measure 72 metres in total length, and vary in design quality and condition.

Use and activity

- + Shops and restaurants opening hours are based on working hours and restrict the area to thrive during the weekend. After 8pm on weekdays and on Saturdays, 46% of the area's shops and restaurants are open, decreasing to just 30% on Sundays.
- + There are many vacant units, but given the prevailing attitudes of landlords, transforming these as meanwhile uses is a real challenge.
- + Lunchtime food markets are well-used and well-loved by the workers in the area.
- + The area has a distinct character in the evening, overwhelmingly driven by post-work drinks at local pubs.
- + The area's civic infrastructure network is dominated by churches, each with different programmatic focuses that support community.
- + Much of the area's culture is experienced in the public realm, through heritage buildings and Sculpture in the City works.
- + The area's viewing galleries complement nearby tourist attractions, but do not create an area-specific tourist ecosystem, often stymied by narrow retail offer and limited opening times.
- + The area doesn't have much 'visual interest' on the street (e.g. cultural event advertising, colourful signage, flags, etc.) making the hard materiality of the contemporary office buildings even more stark.

What we found

Navigation

- + The area is difficult to navigate if it's unfamiliar, because of its complex system of cut-throughs and alleys and medieval street pattern.
- + Maps of the area can be disorienting or misleading because of the way buildings and public realm are rendered graphically doesn't always align with how a pedestrian experiences the ground plane.
- + Part of the area's charm is stumbling upon a space or a heritage building unexpectedly.

Heritage and lighting

- + The contrast between the historic urban fabric and buildings and the contemporary architecture is the most unique condition about this area.
- + This contrast still has a strong presence on the urban pattern and overall experience of the public realm. Medieval yards and laneways to the west of Gracechurch Street and Bishopsgate have found their contemporary equivalent in the larger privately-owned covered walkways and piazzas to the east.
- + Some heritage façades and pubs act as lit beacons after dark, but many notable features are unlit.
- + Churches across the area are not lit.

Mobility and accessibility

- + The streets between the main cycle corridors aren't well used by cyclists.
- + There is a lack of cycle facilities on streets with higher traffic flows, including Wormwood Street and Eastcheap.
- + The area's footways are incredibly congested at peak times.
- + Pedestrian and cycle casualties account for 71% of all casualties in the EC BID area over the last 5 years.
- + Construction features are endemic to this area, encroaching on the public realm experience, and will remain omnipresent over the years.

Safety and inclusivity

- + The retail offer is not diverse enough to serve a varied array of visitors. It is currently predominantly focused on the male working population.
- + Though there are cafés and shops at a range of price points, affordability is still an issue.
- + The strong presence of security measures strengthens the feeling of surveillance, and impacts the degree to which publicly-accessible spaces feel welcoming.
- + More can be done to provide spaces for young people and students to gather and socialise in the public realm.
- + There are no public toilets in the BID area for women or families.

Aims and guiding principles

The seven aims and the supporting principles have been developed to help guide both the projects the BID will take on, as well as the conversations with stakeholders as larger-scale projects are explored. We envision a future public realm of the Eastern City that is defined by:

Welcoming spaces	Design publicly-accessible spaces that are generous, inviting, and accommodating of the needs of those who work and spend time in, live near, and pass through the area.
Resilient trees and planting	Embrace planting as a key way to address net zero carbon goals and climate adaptation, and ensure the area is as green as it can be through protection of existing planting, innovative techniques that are suited to the area's unique microclimate conditions.
Lively uses and activity	Create a lively place, harnessing the energy of commerce and trade that characterised the area in the past and celebrating the area's cultural and recreational destinations.
Intuitive navigation	Make it easier to find your way around the area, while also making it a rewarding place for wandering and discovering.
Historic character and lighting	Celebrate, reveal, highlight and improve the setting of the heritage features across the area.
An accessible environment for all	Establish environments where all modes of movement can coexist – with priority for walking, wheeling and cycling to contribute to climate and health goals.
A safe and inclusive neighbourhood	Promote streets and spaces where all users feel safe and share in a sense of belonging.

Welcoming
Resilient
Active and lively
Intuitive
Historic
Accessible
Safe and inclusive

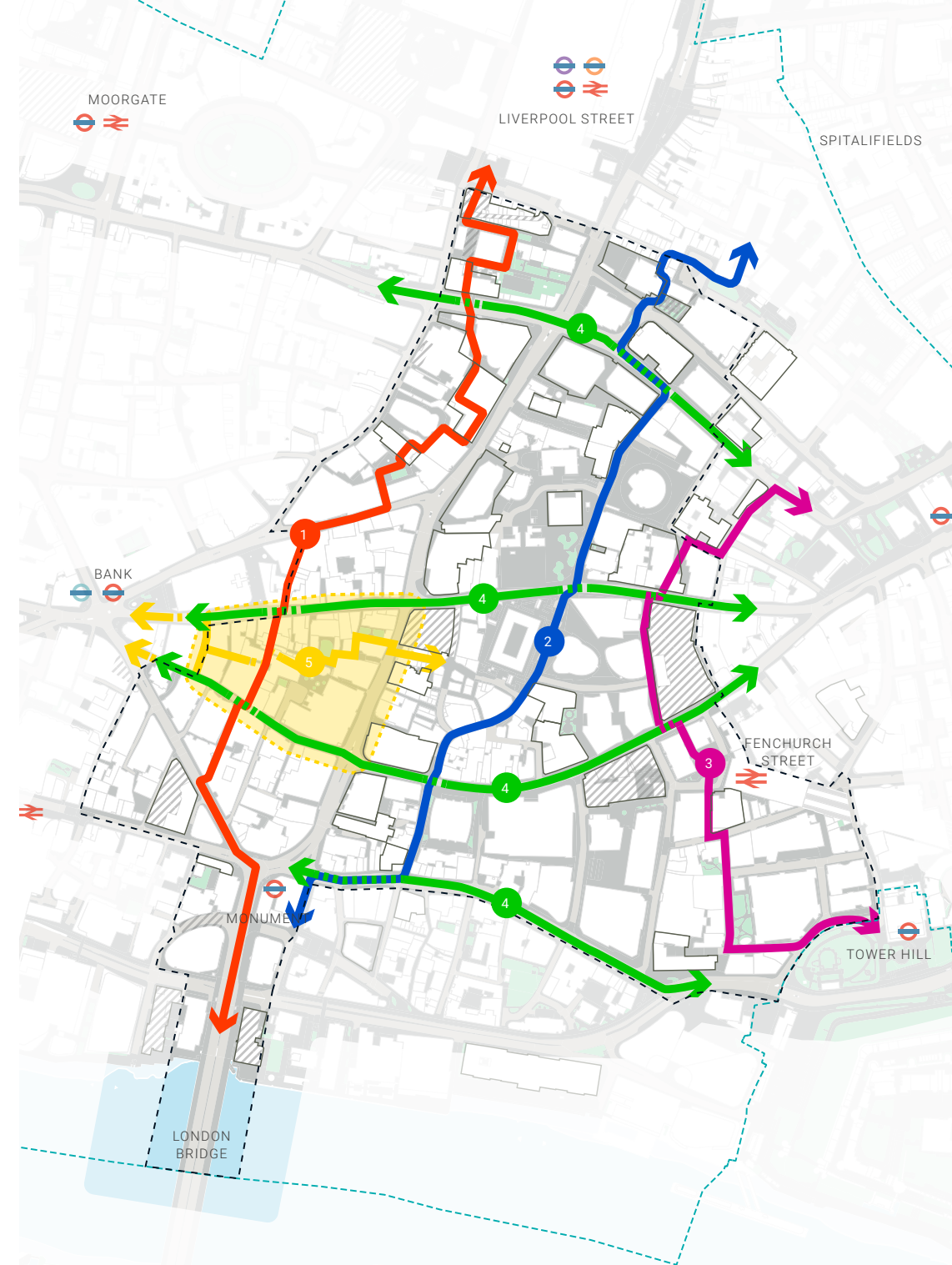


Project families and site-specific interventions

We have developed five families of projects, each focusing on different routes through the Eastern City area. Within each project family, we have highlighted:

- + **Small-scale interventions:** We have highlighted numerous small-scale interventions along each route, which align to the Aims of the Vision.
- + **Priority projects:** Within each project family, we have highlighted discrete projects at specific site locations. These vary in scale and type, but all have identifiable critical pathways for delivery.
- + **Transformational projects:** Across the families we have highlighted four larger-scale projects that can transform specific streets and spaces.

- 1 London Bridge ————— Liverpool Street
- 2 Monument ————— Spitalfields
- 3 Tower Hill ————— Aldgate
- 4 West ————— East
- 5 Bank ————— Leadenhall Market



Projects in this family are grouped along the historic lanes and alleyways west of Bishopsgate and Gracechurch Street. This project family connects small-scale medieval courts through medieval lanes and alleyways, like Nicholas Lane, Birchin Lane, Finch Lane, and Victorian-era street improvement schemes like King William Street. This family features the historic layering that is very typical of this area and unique in its the depth of those layers, crossing over the former location of the Roman Wall.

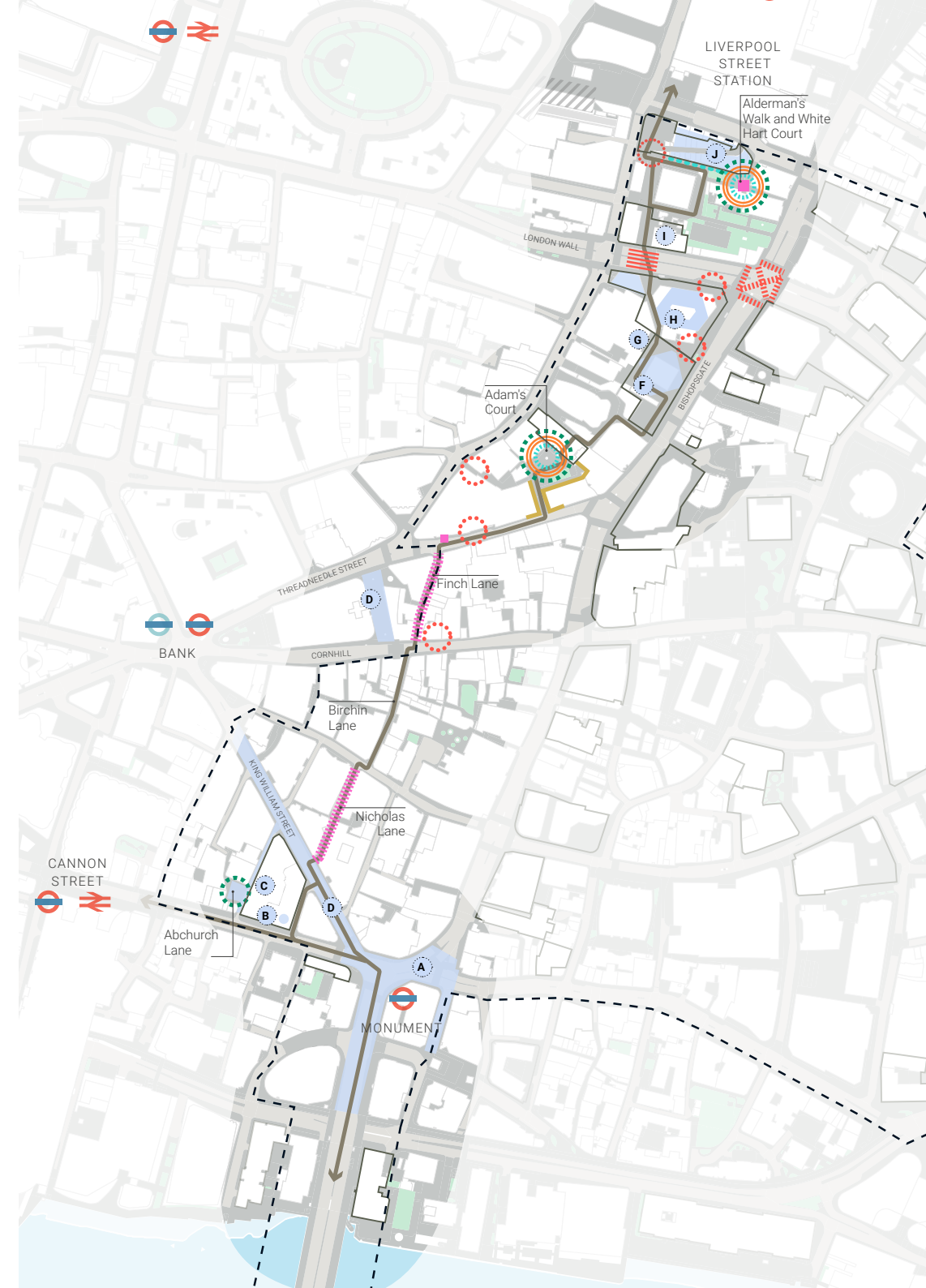
RECENT AND UPCOMING PROJECTS

- A** Monument Junction improvements (TfL)
- B** New Bank tube entrance (TfL)
- C** Improvements to Abchurch Lane from TfL scheme
- D** King William Street improvements (CoL)
- E** Royal Exchange plaza improvements
- F** New covered public space at 55 Bishopsgate
- G** New connections through 55 and 99 Bishopsgate
- H** New cultural attraction and food market at 99 Bishopsgate
- I** New connection through 55 Old Broad Street
- J** New food market at Liverpool Street

□ Development pipeline

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

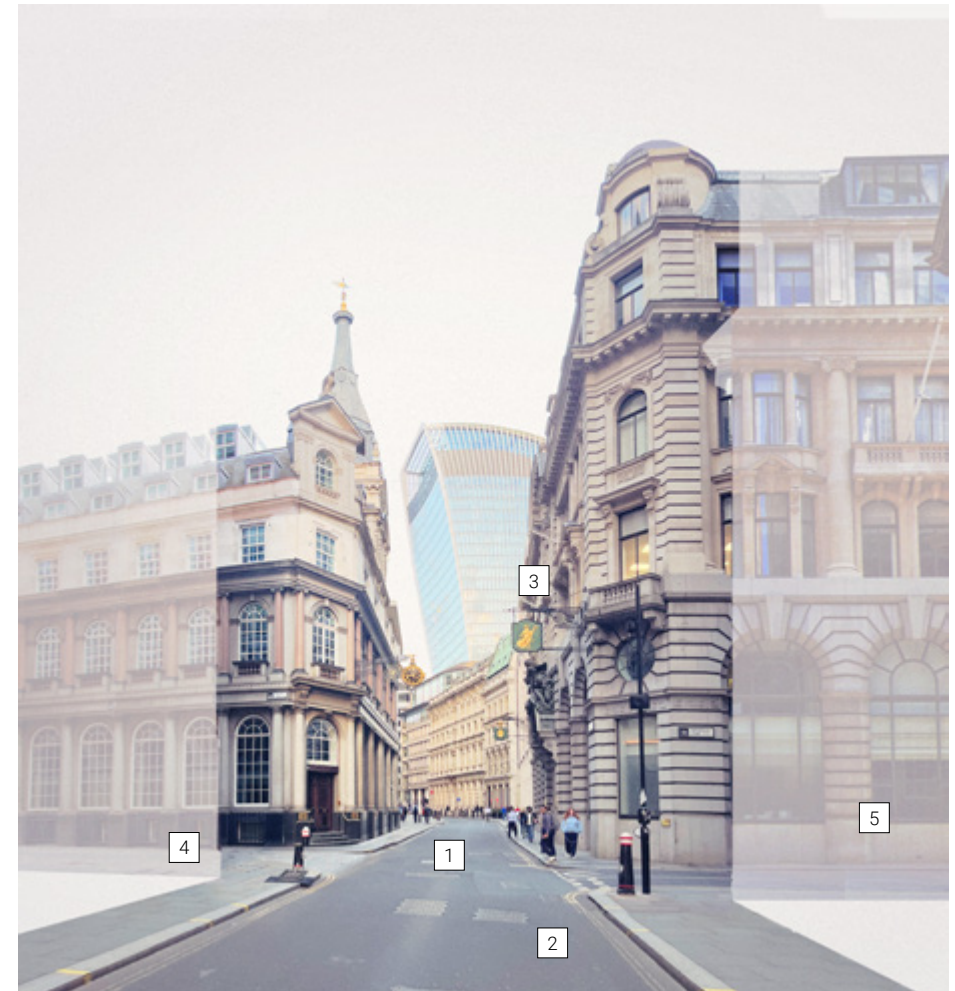
- New or improved public space
Welcoming public space
- Opportunity for publicly-accessible ground floor
Welcoming public space
- Opportunity for planting
Resilient trees and planting
- Space for events
Lively uses and activity
- Dressing up the street
Lively uses and activity
- Wayfinding totem
Intuitive navigation
- Opportunity for paved street
Intuitive navigation
- Signpost to spaces at height
Intuitive navigation
- Heritage facade lighting
Historic character and lighting
- Alleyway lighting scheme
Historic character and lighting
- Timed street closure
Walkable and wheelable
- New pedestrian crossing
Walkable and wheelable
- Space for dockless bike parking
Walkable and wheelable
- Opportunity to reveal history
Safe and inclusive
- Opportunity for play
Safe and inclusive



Lombard Street at Birchin Lane

Lombard Street connects Bank to Gracechurch Street and is a quiet, low-traffic street. The heritage buildings and features, paired with the long view to the Walkie Talkie building, create a distinctive environment, specific only to this place in London.

- 1 Low motor vehicle traffic flow
- 2 Existing contra-flow cycle lane lacks clear demarcation from incoming traffic
- 3 Heritage signage contributes to the historic character of the area
- 4 Surface treatment on Birchin Lane supports implicit wayfinding
- 5 Nicholas Lane is used as a cut-through and is lined with blank frontages and loading bays



Lombard Street at Birchin Lane: Celebrating heritage

Opportunities

- 1 Paved carriageway improves setting of heritage buildings
- 2 Raised carriageway at junction of Lombard Street, Birchin Lane and Nicholas Lane provides implicit wayfinding and supports secondary north-south pedestrian route
- 3 Improved cycling infrastructure with new markings to dedicated contra-flow cycle lane
- 4 Improved lighting and celebration of heritage features with additional signage
- 5 Additional seating to support active uses along Birchin Lane
- 6 Improved setting at Nicholas Lane with reduced loading access requirements following consolidated servicing strategy
- 7 Opportunity to use public art to celebrate abolitionist history at George Yard


















This project family unites the spaces among the tall, contemporary office towers in this area. This area was bombed heavily in the Blitz, and the large land parcels that were assembled here allowing for towers and plazas, a typology favoured by modernist planners and architects. Many of the streets in this area, including Philpot Lane, Lime Street, St Mary Axe were all part of the medieval street pattern in the area producing a distinctively curved thoroughfare easy to pick out on a map.

RECENT AND UPCOMING PROJECTS

- A** Monument Junction improvements (TfL)
- B** Proposed food market at 70 Gracechurch
- C** Potential to improve Cullum Street through Fountain House development
- D** St Andrew's Undershaft churchyard improvements (CoL)
- E** Developments along western side of St Mary Axe
- F** Recently improved cut-through at St Mary Axe
- G** Jubilee Gardens (CoL)

 Development pipeline

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

-  New or improved public space
-  Opportunity for publicly-accessible ground floor
-  Opportunity for planting
-  Space for events
-  Dressing up the street
-  Wayfinding totem
-  Opportunity for paved street
-  Signpost to spaces at height
-  Heritage facade lighting
-  Alleyway lighting scheme
-  Timed street closure
-  New pedestrian crossing
-  Space for dockless bike parking
-  Opportunity to reveal history
-  Opportunity for play

Welcoming public space

Resilient trees and planting

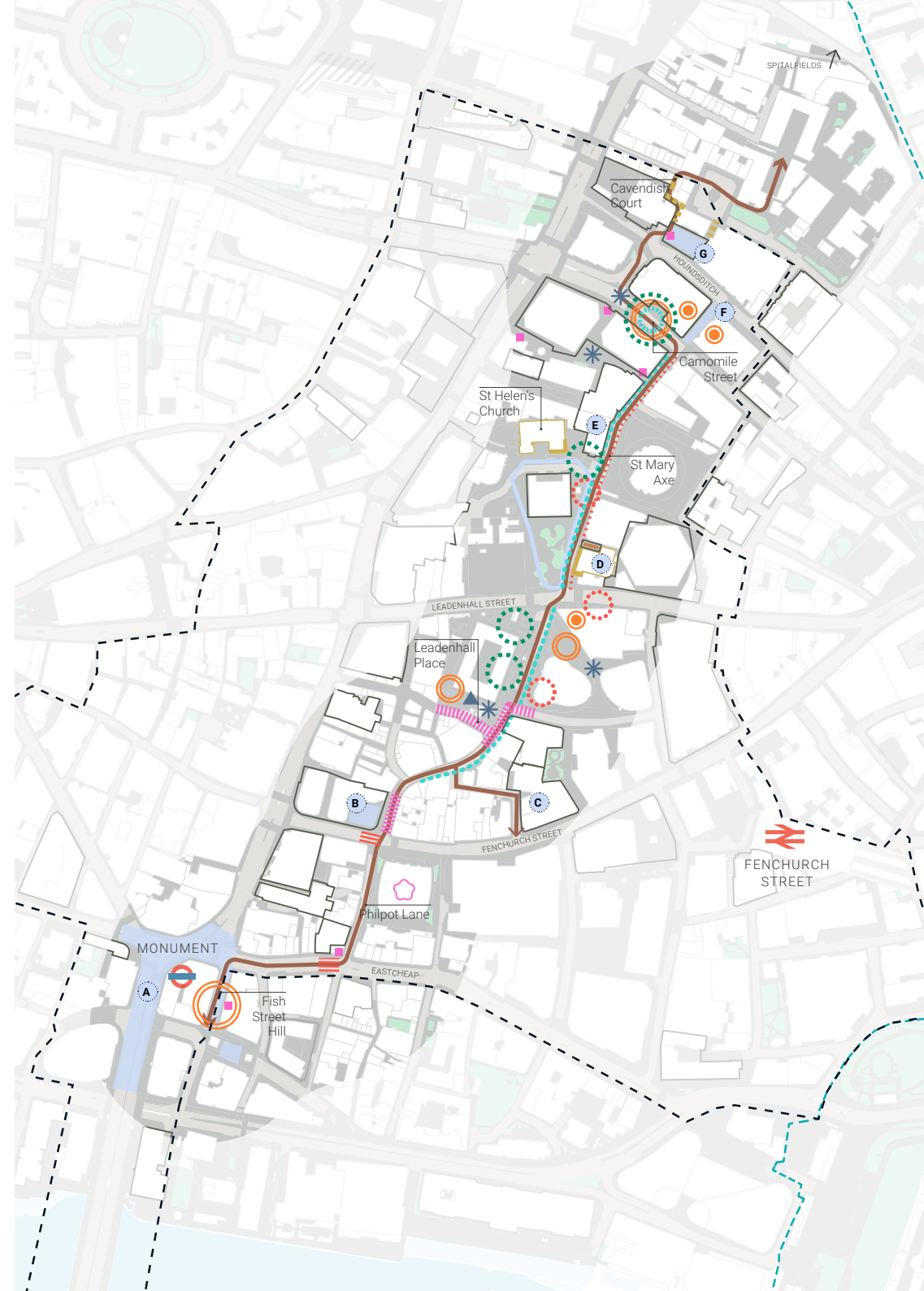
Lively uses and activity

Intuitive navigation

Historic character and lighting

Walkable and wheelable

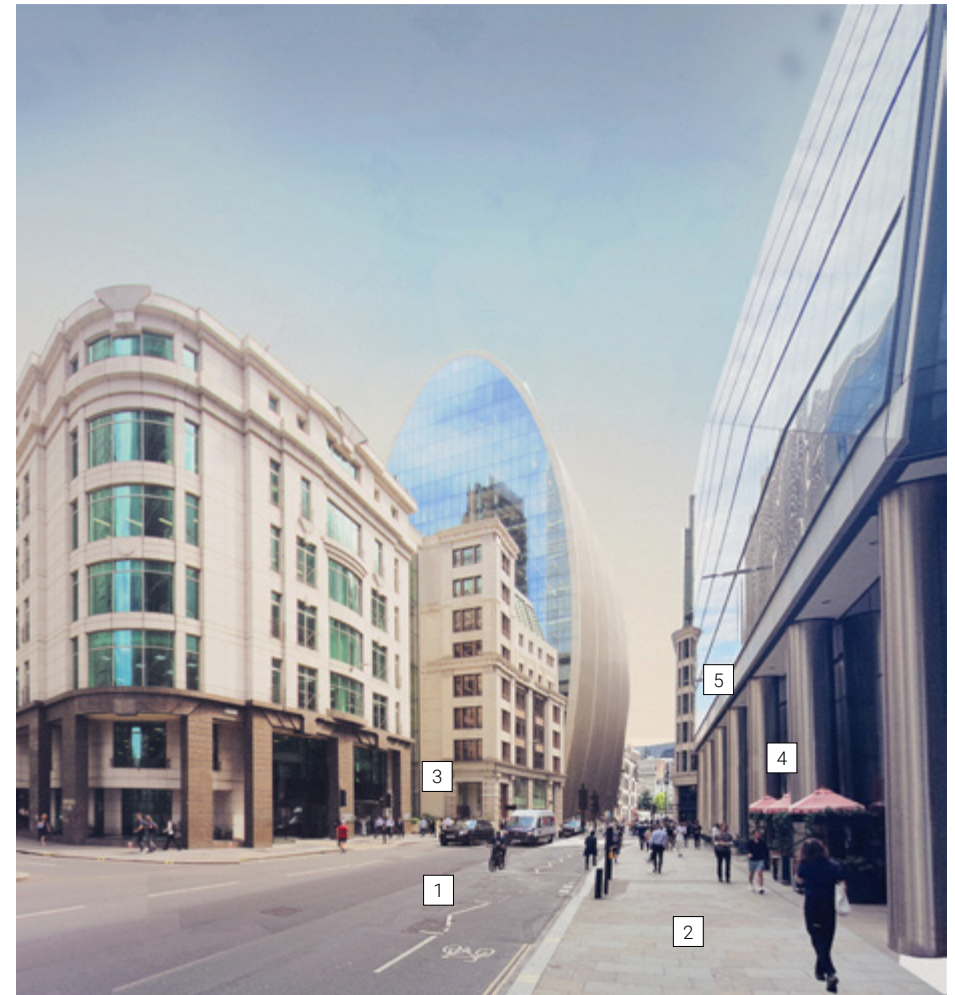
Safe and inclusive



Camomile Street

Camomile Street forms part of the east-west route that links London Wall to Aldgate via Houndsditch and Bevis Marks. It experiences high traffic volumes, including buses, heavy goods vehicles, taxis, and private cars, as well as cycles. Pedestrian flows are high due to the proximity to Liverpool Street Station, but there are just two pedestrian crossings. The pavements, though relatively wide for the area, can get highly congested at commute times and lunchtime. Bevis Marks and Houndsditch have multiple traffic lanes, with little opportunity to stop and rest, and minimal greening.

- 1 High motor vehicle flows and limited pedestrian crossing opportunities
- 2 Uneven footway allocation with one side considerably wider than the other
- 3 Lack of planting and areas for dwelling
- 4 Limited active uses and outdoor seating
- 5 The existing material palette is overwhelmingly cold and stark



Camomile Street: A new park for the City of London


Opportunities

- 1 A transformational rearrangement of Camomile Street and Houndsditch creates the opportunity for a new piece of public space with significant greening. New planting beds with integrated seating and diverse mix of species provide spaces for dwelling
- 2 Removed gyratory system. Houndsditch reconfigured to allow two-way traffic
- 3 Proposed active uses support the activation of this new public space
- 4 Two-way cycle track through new public space
- 5 Vertical planting to building facade
- 6 Wayfinding totem and public art aid navigation across the area
- 7 Additional cycle parking along Bevis Marks, with areas set aside for bike and scooter hire parking
- 8 Widened and relocated crossing improves connectivity with Liverpool Street Station
- 9 Play features that evoke London Wall heritage


















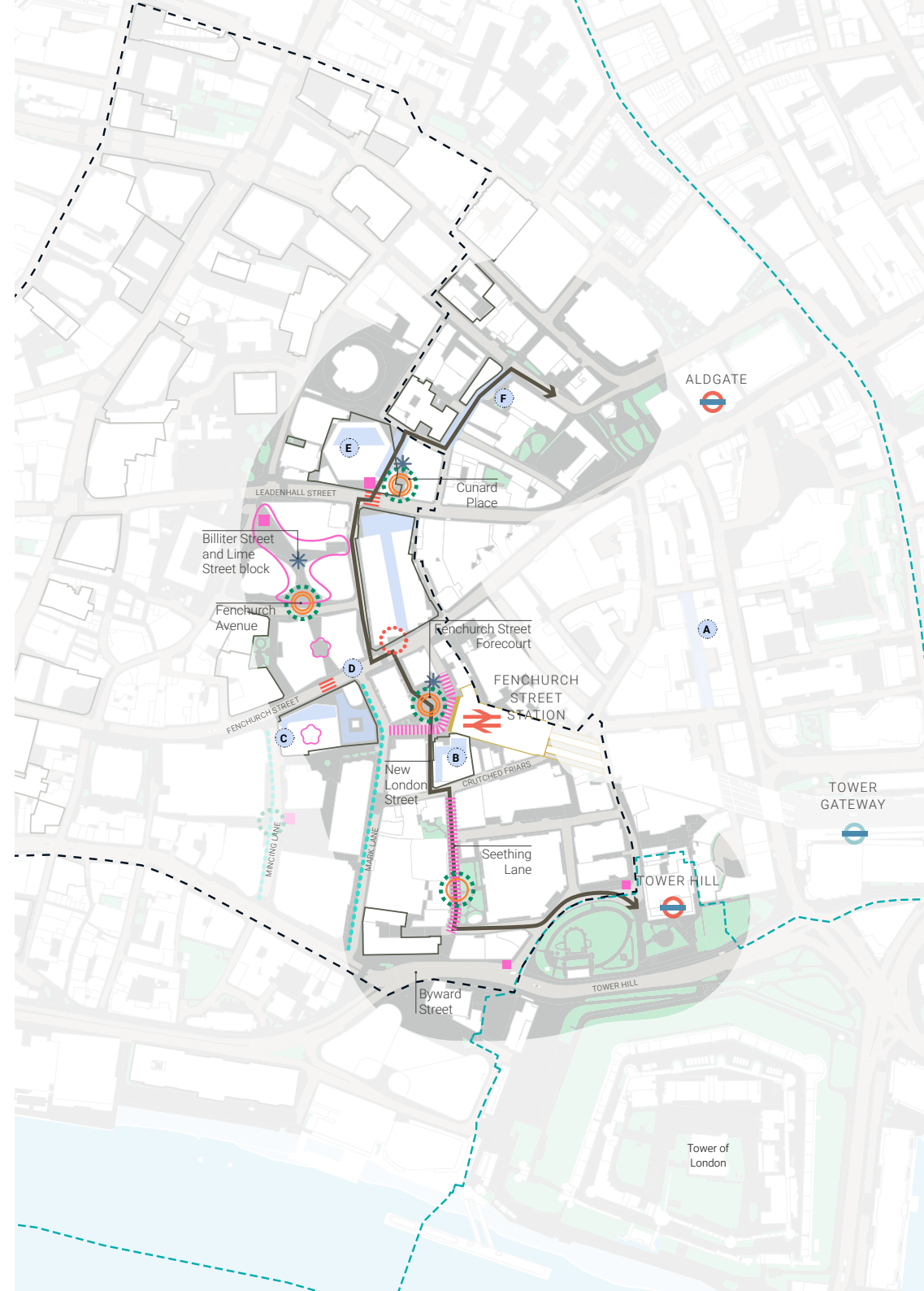
These projects seek to improve the arrival experience to the Eastern City and to strengthen the physical connection between it and Aldgate, Whitechapel and the Tower of London. Remnants of the Roman Wall near Tower Hill Station connect this area to the founding of Londinium, while Fenchurch Street Station and the rail lines extending eastward were part of a series of transportation improvements made in the mid- and late nineteenth century that began to change the nature of the City from a dense mix of uses to a predominantly commercial area.

RECENT AND UPCOMING PROJECTS

- A** Vine Street improvements (Aldgate BID)
 - B** New, active ground floor at New London House
 - C** New route through 50 Fenchurch Street
 - D** Improved crossing of Leadenhall Street through CoL scheme
 - E** New route through 100 Leadenhall
 - F** Creechurch Lane improvements (CoL)
-  Development pipeline

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

-  New or improved public space
-  Opportunity for publicly-accessible ground floor
-  Opportunity for planting Resilient trees and planting
-  Space for events Lively uses and activity
-  Dressing up the street
-  Wayfinding totem
-  Opportunity for paved street Intuitive navigation
-  Signpost to spaces at height
-  Heritage facade lighting Historic character and lighting
-  Alleyway lighting scheme
-  Timed street closure
-  New pedestrian crossing Walkable and wheelable
-  Space for dockless bike parking
-  Opportunity to reveal history
-  Opportunity for play Safe and inclusive



Fenchurch Street Station

Fenchurch Street Station opens up onto a sizeable public space, owned by Network Rail and left largely open to allow for pedestrian traffic to the station. Recently, the BID added terracotta planter benches along some active frontages. Every Tuesday to Friday, a lunchtime food market attracts workers from the surrounding office buildings. The hotel development at New London House will open up onto the space, which will make the space feel more active later into the evening.

- 1 Existing planting beds lack a diverse mix of planting and do not provide visual interest.
- 2 Existing granite benches feel cold and wet in the winter months
- 3 Lunchtime market is popular and would benefit from a dedicated space
- 4 Existing lamp columns are outdated and do not provide adequate lighting levels to create a safe space at night



Fenchurch Street Station: A safe and inviting gateway

Opportunities

- 1 Reconfigured in-ground planters with biodiverse planting, improved seating and low-level lighting create a more welcoming space for dwelling
- 2 Improved route-through to the station
- 3 Paved and flush carriageway for an improved arrival experience along Fenchurch Place and London Street
- 4 Uplighting to station facade highlighting heritage features
- 5 Decluttered public space to host weekly lunchtime market
- 6 Existing trees retained
- 7 Retained taxi rank
- 8 Proposed hotel lobby and meanwhile active uses support the activation of the new piazza throughout the day and evening
- 9 Opportunity for playable features


















The streets that run west-to-east across the BID area perform a similar function, but each has a different character that can be enhanced. These east-west streets create a unique street pattern, dating back to the medieval period.

RECENT AND UPCOMING PROJECTS

- A** Cornhill traffic scheme (CoL)
- B** New route through 1 Leadenhall Street
- C** New route through 70 Gracechurch Street
- D** New route through 50 Fenchurch Street
- E** Junctions improvements through Monument Junction and Gracechurch/ Bishopsgate schemes (TfL)
- F** Fenchurch Street Healthy Streets Plan (CoL)
- G** Leadenhall Street improvements (CoL)
- H** London Wall study (CoL)

 Development pipeline

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

-  New or improved public space
-  Opportunity for publicly-accessible ground floor
-  Opportunity for planting
-  Space for events
-  Dressing up the street
-  Wayfinding totem
-  Opportunity for paved street
-  Signpost to spaces at height
-  Heritage facade lighting
-  Alleyway lighting scheme
-  Timed street closure
-  New pedestrian crossing
-  Space for dockless bike parking
-  Opportunity to reveal history
-  Opportunity for play

Resilient trees and planting

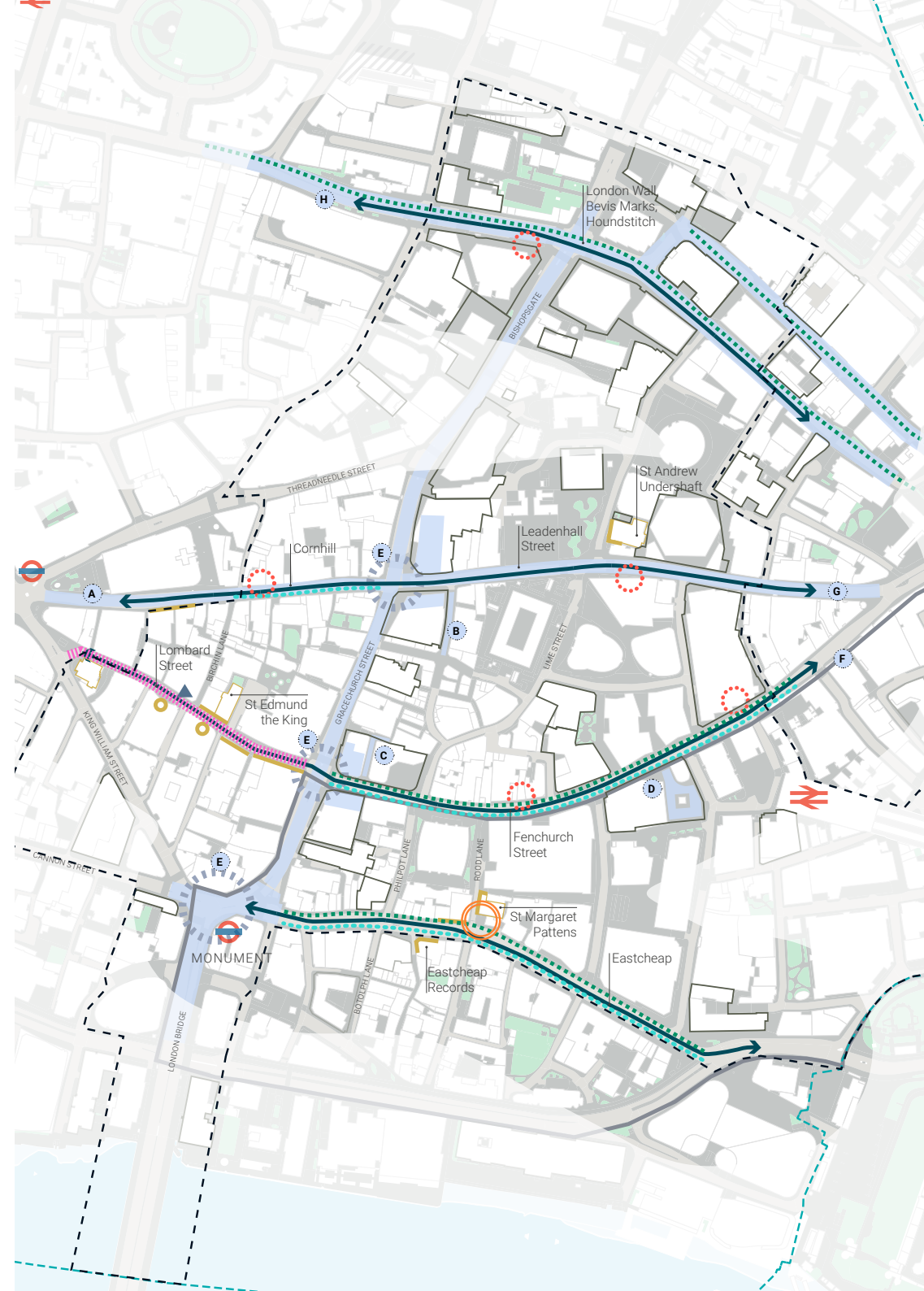
Lively uses and activity

Intuitive navigation

Historic character and lighting

Walkable and wheelable

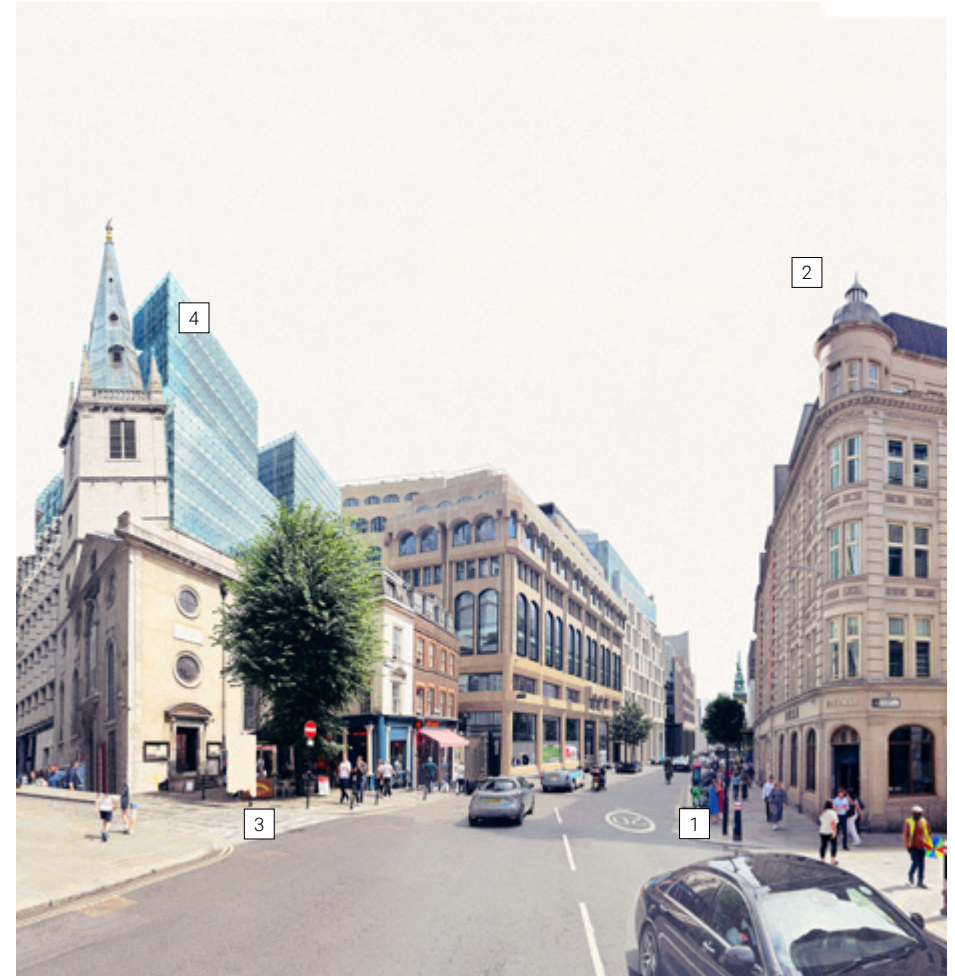
Safe and inclusive



Eastcheap

Eastcheap is a busy east-west boulevard connecting Monument to the Tower of London. It is heavily used by vehicles and pedestrians, and would benefit from widened footways, improved pedestrian crossings and cycle facilities. Eastcheap sits within the City of London's Fenchurch Street Healthy Streets Plan. Existing evening uses on Eastcheap create a pocket of after-dark activity anchored around Eastcheap Records, and could be celebrated as a mini cultural cluster.

- 1 Narrow and congested footways
- 2 Delightful architectural features aren't suitably lit and go unnoticed in the evening
- 3 Active use activates St Margaret Pattens' forecourt
- 4 Church spire acts as a wayfinding landmark during the day



Eastcheap:

A flexible thoroughfare

Opportunities

- 1 Widened footways provide space for additional seating, planting and cycle parking
- 2 Existing parking retained, consolidated and raised within the footways on both sides of Eastcheap. Timed and shared use bays that provide loading at times that align with the City Plan 2040 and avoid peak pedestrian hours (i.e. no deliveries between 7am–10am, 12pm–2pm and 4pm–7pm on weekdays)
- 3 Opportunity for cultural banners to be installed that celebrate cultural events and contribute to general identity of place
- 4 Lighting to heritage features and notable façades along southern side of the street, echo the existing lighting of façades on the northern elevation
- 5 Additional circular bench to existing feature tree to support active uses
- 6 Lighting to church spire to aid wayfinding after-dark
- 7 Dedicated cycle lanes in each direction (1.7m-wide shown here)


















At the heart of the Eastern City is a network of historic courts, alleys, churchyards, and buildings that creates a distinctive character. The alleyways and coffee shops here were critical sites of informal connection and conversation that supported the nearby institutions in the modern period. The Roman Forum was near the northeastern corner of the area.

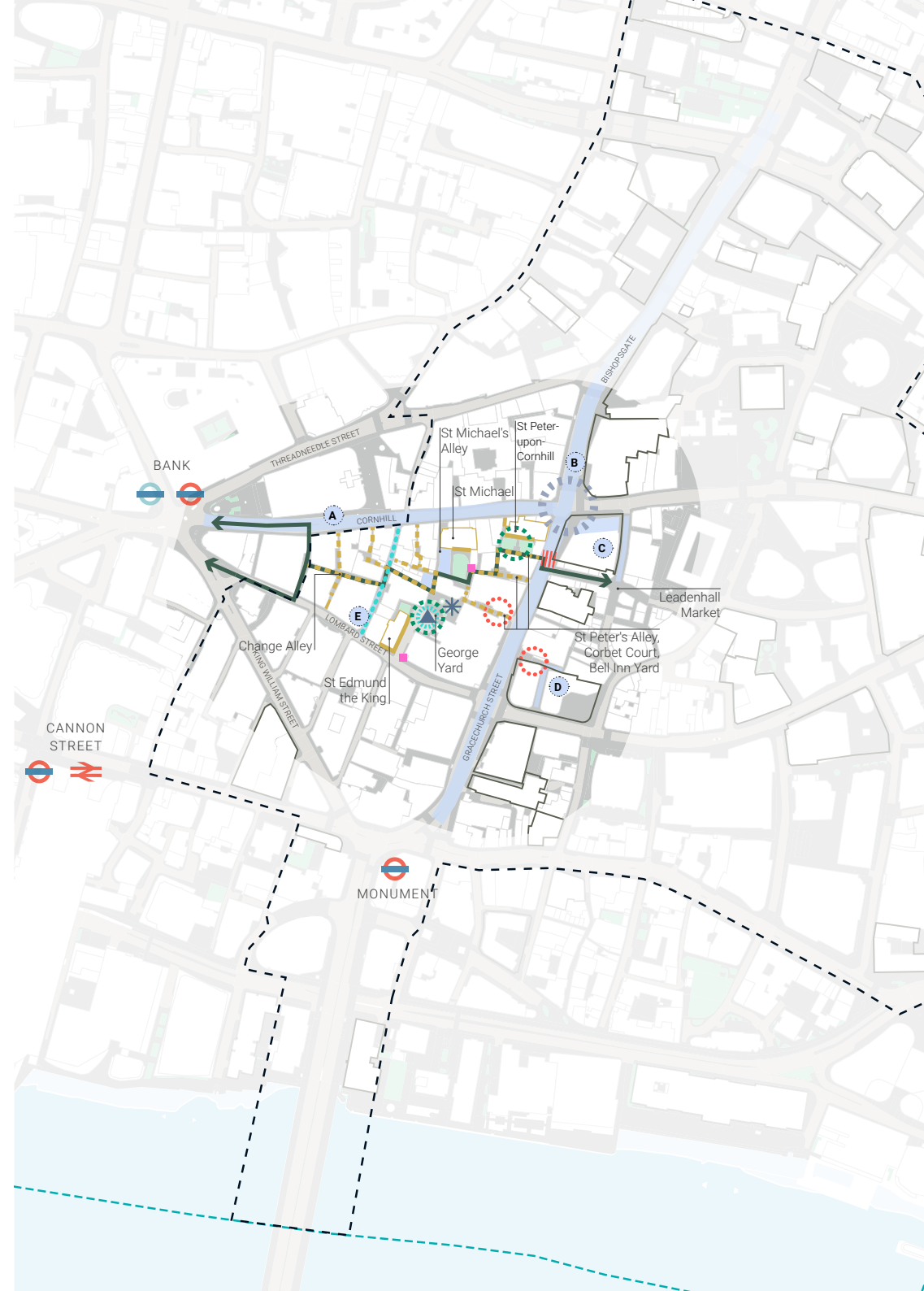
RECENT AND UPCOMING PROJECTS

- A** Cornhill traffic scheme (CoL)
- B** Junctions improvements through Monument Junction and Gracechurch/ Bishopsgate schemes (TfL)
- C** New route through 1 Leadenhall Street
- D** New route through 70 Gracechurch Street
- E** Birchin Lane public realm improvements (CoL)

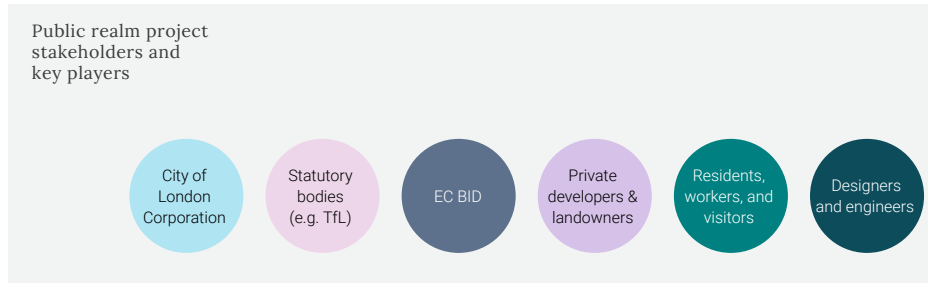
 Development pipeline

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

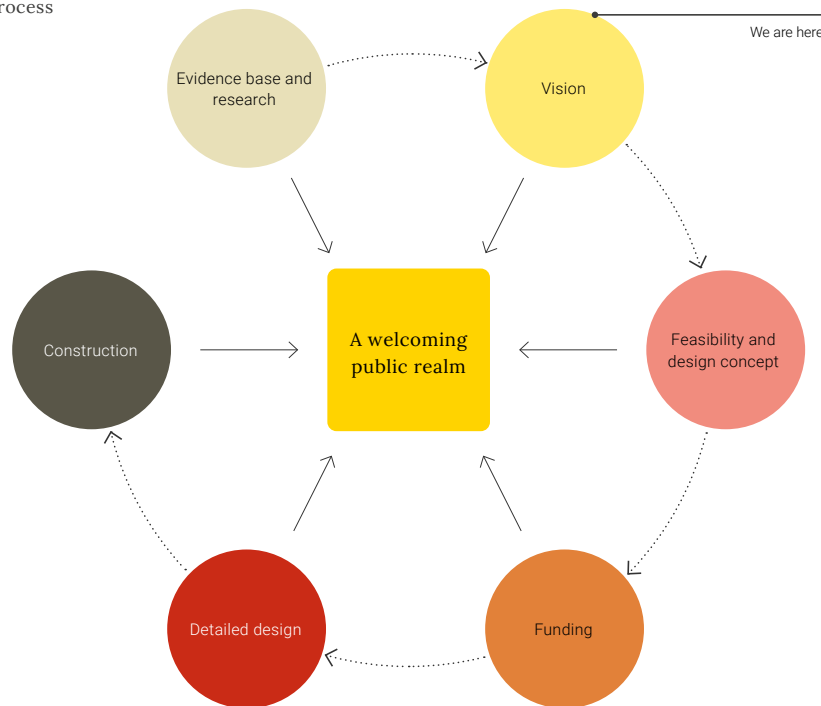
-  New or improved public space
-  Opportunity for publicly-accessible ground floor
-  Opportunity for planting Resilient trees and planting
-  Space for events Lively uses and activity
-  Dressing up the street
-  Wayfinding totem
-  Opportunity for paved street Intuitive navigation
-  Signpost to spaces at height
-  Heritage facade lighting Historic character and lighting
-  Alleyway lighting scheme
-  Timed street closure
-  New pedestrian crossing Walkable and wheelable
-  Space for dockless bike parking
-  Opportunity to reveal history
-  Opportunity for play Safe and inclusive



Next steps



Public realm project process



Partner.

Collaborate.

Share knowledge

Convene.

Support.

This Public Realm Vision is the first step of a long-term process of collaboration and partnership. Every subsequent step of public realm projects and programmes will be the result of conversations between a broad group of stakeholders, and the BID is eager to play a role in convening these groups and establishing partnerships.

Some of the smaller-scale area-wide projects highlighted in this report, especially those in the Aims and Guiding Principles chapter, can be funded and implemented by the BID directly.

The larger-scale public realm improvements, highlighted as Priority and Transformative Projects, are complex projects requiring ongoing collaboration and partnership across stakeholders.

In the coming months, the BID will work to identify short-term projects to implement, as well as discuss the longer-term transformative projects with public sector partners.

